

Hallmarks
Spring 1998



Fireworks on the Fourth of July

The Fourth of July came,
gradually and silently;
I didn't notice
until it was already wrapped around me
like a Chinese finger trap,
secure in its position.

The Fourth of July came,
it brought parties, fireworks,
and him.

We lay on the ground,
the well-kept grass
softly prickling our backs through our shirts,
reminding me of the way it feels
to slowly drop a tiny chain into the palm of my hand,
or brush my wrist
across the end of the silky tassels hanging from a lampshade.

We lay on the ground,
where the only thing between us
and those glistening, promising stars
is distance - a sad, unconquerable distance -
and waited for the fireworks.

A single firework exploded
into my field of stars and silence,
like the first drop of rain
into a still and steady pond,
and for an instant
lit the sky with its fire
and banished the shadows
from every curve and corner of my face.



A single firework exploded
in the night with illumination
so beautiful and startling,
it pulled the air from my lungs,
and the cold from my body,
and then receded into darkness again.

Margo Martin(11)

I turned my head to look at him,
seeing the fireworks just as clearly
in his skin and his smile
as if I had watched them with my own eyes.

I turned my head to look at him,
and then turned back to the gasping sky,
but none of the other rockets,
with their color and charm,
were so bright
and so tender
as that very first one.

Maria Gumina(11)

3rd period English

The scientific reasoning behind color is that the one shade that is left out of the electromagnetic spectrum is the one we name. The one that isn't present is the one we see, and isn't that how so many things are?

Last night was pink to me. It was a mixture of sweat and scalp clashing with my deodorant. It was a dark room but I could see everyone's face and no one was afraid to look at me-to hug me-to come close or go far. And I ate tofu cheesecake and drank a cup of 50 cent coffee and watched little girls dancing with their mothers until it all became a beat and vibration and the school house was alive and I was in the middle.

It seems ironic how parents tell their children when they insist on their own way-"you are not the center of the world." This was the first lesson I had ingrained into me and now I am starting to think how wrong my father and his father and his father before have had it. Everyone is the center of their own world. What is relative to you is all you know and all you need to know. Maybe I will tell my child-"you are the center of your world." And maybe instead of making them selfish and uncaring and miserly, which seems to be the underlying fear and expectation that we have for the most innocent of all youth, it will make them strong and confident and give them firm ground to stand on when they are in doubt. Maybe it will give them an island upon which to recollect and teach them how to swim.

Today is a funny shade of orange. It is Sunday morning and people are swinging open white church doors and women, beneath those smiles, are thinking about stripping off their confining shoes and slips as soon as they get home, before they prepare fried chicken and potato salad. Children are thinking about the naps they don't want to take as their eyes are already closing. Men are thinking of the work they have to do in the yard and in the office and in the bedroom.

And I am here, walking down this crumbled sidewalk, trying to get to a higher state of mind, trying not to feel so casual in my torn up jeans and flannel shirt, or too cold in my open sandals with my bare neck.

Julianne Shelton(12)

Sweet Romance

Sweet romance
Hmmm
Do ya wanna dance?
Yeah
Take a chance
Baby
I'm the one for you

You see that uncut spring hill over there boy?
That's our chance at sweet romance
Take my nubbly quilt with years of wholly memories and we can
make some that are just ours
Do ya wanna dance?
Yeah, we'll start twirling when the darkness comes around at exactly the right
Moment
Let's take that chance
This ain't no chance with you baby
I know you're the one for me

Megan Casey(10)

Tulips

tulips, trees, tranquil
breeze, tiny tipsy trampled
knees, tell tales of me.

Haley Rumore(12)



K.C. Bull(12)

Music and Lights

Music and lights and teenage voices clutter open-topped
wranglers,
Lips touch, hands feel and freedom reigns over hearts.
What are restrictions, speed limits, or curfews
Without the passion of youth to break them?
Minds lose their way in twining ivy roads,
And eyes are blind to sign labeling the "best path".

Porch wings squeak to the rhythms of Otis Redding,
While sloshing warm gin form old jelly glasses.
The cherry sun sinks into the tranquility behind the dog-
woods
And the last match has lighted the last cigarette.
I close my eyes and say goodbye to spring.

Jessica Betts(12)

Candle Rising

As I slip my warm fingers onto your cool surface I feel the nubs and the rough spots life has handed you. I glide softly down as you turn and begin, I could see clearly only for a second before you left me, it seems you love to come and go like the wind. My disappointment stirred as I shook my fist violently in the air, only to produce images of old sparks and lost flames. Suddenly your absence filled me with a deep chill, then in your arrogant way you reappeared and filled me with warmth. I reached my hands and covered you like a mother would her child; desperately clinging so not to be lost. Your beauty magnified as you gently swayed back and forth finally reaching the pool of solid ground where you died in my hands. You did not go without burning a memory into my skin or leaving a clear path for me to see. The new light I see now that you are gone will withstand the tears I shed in the loss of you and the rough winds life will blow in my direction. Now able to walk through the midnight skies fearless of evil that lurks in darkness, we sit together. I hold you in my hands and I watch you as the great moments become grand and later, lessen as the sun begins to rise. Time goes on and I need you less and less. I begin to see with my own eyes and confidently breath deeper without the fear of hurting you. The moon sets and my lips gently press together and with the wind I take your breath away.

Lauren Gaffney(11)

Polaroids

I look at the picture in the old blue photo album
when mom and dad were still married
and I was just a seed in mother's stomach

My dad's shirt is unbuttoned and his hair is thick
my mom holds the bridle to her horse Misty
who she gave up shortly after I was born--
That is the first memory I have of my mother--
galloping across the backyard while I searched for pebbles that
were
round and smooth on our patio
I gave the best ones to dad when he left on Mondays
and he kept those rocks
and mom kept the notes that said "I love you honey"

It's days like these
when I wake up in an empty car
with peanut shells on my lap
that the same feeling of loneliness comes over me
and wish my mom had not left me sleeping--
I don't like to wake up alone

I don't think mom did either
but she's married to God now
and she says other people don't understand
and she's right
because God doesn't eat breakfast with us in the morning
or decorate the tree with us at Christmas
or tuck me in at night
or kiss her on the lips

Juliane Shelton(12)

Wildflowers

When we were young
We bent over backward
And fell into summer's heavy air-
When no one was around
We escaped to our special place
To sit among the daisies
And watch the sun meet the lavender sky.
The dry August rain hit our pink faces
As raindrops slid down our cheeks like little saltless tears
And the haze of colors faded and changed.
Darkness set in and you were afraid;
Your tender, bare feet caressed the dewy grass
But your steps didn't quite reach the ground
As you tried to run away.
Did you think I would lie?
Maybe it's just not the same.
I never did really find you,
Just wildflowers
You dropped along the way.

Catherine Carroll(9)

I Want To Be Overwhelmed By Stars

I want to be overwhelmed by stars
To memorize the moon
Make friends with Orion
As he stands fierce above me
I want to lie under stars
For hours, night after night
While Ray Charles wails
Like he can see the stars too
Even though its been so long

K.C. Bull (12)

Attaining Maturity

Three and five

We were all smiles
In those days
Our hair was bobbed
We wore matching denim jumpers
Our pink pudgy fingers knew only
Mud pies and barbie dolls
Visions of tree houses and backyard tag
Were our dimensions
Friends were non-existent-
We had each other
And boys had cooties.
Our conversations
Consisted of playground rules

Nine and Eleven

We grew up a little
Over the years
Lost our innocence
We no longer wore matching jumpers.
I wore my hair long and blonde-
Yours was short and brunette.
We fought over the front seat
On the way to school
And boys finally
Caught our attention.
Our stubborn arguments lasted
Until mom bought us icees
We still shared a room
And whispered each other to sleep

Every time our eyes met
We burst into laughter
I bossed you around
In those days
After all I was older

Fifteen and seventeen

We have grown up
You and I
Or at least we think we have
We finally have the privacy
Of our own rooms
With our own style
I am comfortable
In my tie-dyed shirt
And faded blue jeans
You in your black pants
And crop top
Boys have entered and left our lives
And left our hearts broken
We no longer fight over the front seat
It is always yours
I have taught you
to fight for what you believe
We can finally giggle
About the same cute boys
And share a common faith
We are still
Smiles and laughter
It is so hard though
Without
Mud pies and barbie dolls.

Margo Martin(11)

Smoking Poetry

As the wafts of smoke drift into the wind
In smooth gray swirls
I wonder why she doesn't care

her mouth loosely holds a cigarette
as she caresses the car's cold steering wheel
bringing her fingers once more to her chapped lips
she inhales the poisonous fumes

and I realize that every day
when I watch her doing this
she is not only killing a little piece of herself
but a piece of me too

yet still I envy her because she is the one who smokes poetry
as if it was created solely for her
to flow from her jumbled mind and appear flawlessly on paper

and I envy her falling hard for every boy to cross her path
but the part of her who doesn't care if she's killing herself
this is what kills me

because she is one I love so dearly
and who loves me too

and then she reaches for another

Alice Orman (9)



Sip the Honey

Devon Williamson(12)

Sip the honey from which the morning sun rises
We'll share the fruits of unknown souls
They grow from a soil flowing with conversation

Mad amazing how they watch the mother
As if it's only a pair of green lenses altering their view
They are blind to beautiful complexity

Touching soft skin they only felt what they saw
It could never be real for them
It's only a touch and "touch" is only a word they found in the
trash

You like the sunflower because everyone likes the sunflower
But what if I told you I worship the weeds and pray to the iris
Am I still who you thought I was?
K.C. Bull(12)

Questions for the Lawn

do you love spring, Grass?
do you grow great green
to be crushed by blankets and barefeet?
do i bend you the wrong way
my cup of cool tea against your soft stalk?
am i heavy on you
mashing you down towards the dirt?
must you wait for wind, Grass
to tell your neighbors how you mean?
(i see you with the wind,
wiggling conversations over my lawn--
your lawn?)
do you mind for hands
to fondle you, feel you?
must you plug up your parts when lips
blow into you to make noise?
(the sound, Grass, the sound!)
how is it for toes
to uproot you,
to interrupt you sex?

in spring,
you grow among the dead.
you are mowed up,
split back onto your old self.
in spring,
dogs choose You over cushions.
kids pick You over pavement.
families take You over tables.
lovers embrace You over beds.
do you love spring, Grass,
when we suddenly invite ourselves over
walking in on your slumber

do you love spring, Grass,
when we suddenly invite ourselves over
walking in on your slumber
trudging over your conversation
mowing up your appointments
stealing away your baby green virginity?

Tallu Schuyler(12)

Summer of '94

she was always the fair-skinned one
with a smattering of freckles
that I had never envied
and my skin was bronze, and tough
I let the sun devour my body
while she hid herself from day's light

at night we were alive and swimming
her hair caught the pool lights
And cast ruby reflections in the tenth hour
I was jealous of her majestic presence
for she made a better mermaid

sometimes she walked solemnly upon the sand
but I turned somersaults and twirled
we created imaginary lovers
and engraved their initials with ours into the beach

I was superior to her youth
dragging her about by the collar
and she followed dutifully

yesterday we listened to the songs of that summer
and realized the changes in us

she is still my better half

Martha Grace Orman(11)

Fade

my heart took a trip
long and tiring, but enjoyable
it lusted on the wine
and danced wildly, with an African beat
light seeped from deep within to the
outside world
a rope of happiness tied to one
one heart
against another
power and beauty and magic took no boundaries
as they twirled round our fortress
they melted and formed to a new horizon
one
halos of stars formed round about them
and they saw only each other, for they
could see nothing else
tiptoeing across the sky until they
reached
the clouds
they did not breathe
they danced
loosely
flamboyantly
through the world so that the sun could
always reach them
and darkness frowned way behind...
in that eternal day
they came upon a moon-
so lovely and inviting
and flew madly around it

with invincible wings
enraptured so, they lost everything
nothing but them
and time crawled closer
and betrayed them with the darkness
it chased and hunted so
they were caught in an evil web
and torn apart by the wand of Hera
by her cruel hand, dropped to the earth and eaten by
the trees
hanging their lonely heads and dismal arms,
whispering sad ballads into dark dark nights
and howling in search of a lost mate-
these weeping willows

Melissa Moseley (9)



Tallu Schuyler(12)

"How Was Spring"

How the sun lived.
A vibrant life
and brilliant grace
that squinted my eyes
and crinkled my nose
and begged me to love
her artistry.

When the gigantic pine outside
your window
bowed to the royalty of the
passing wind
while it weaved through my hair
and lifted my skirts
with fabric blowing,
these average legs showing,
and hands rushing to hide.

How the rain was alive.
Shimmering to the earth and
all that was with it,
soaking our hair and chilling
our bodies
as we dashed among the murky puddles
and ruined our shirts that had been
pressed and folded
not too long before.

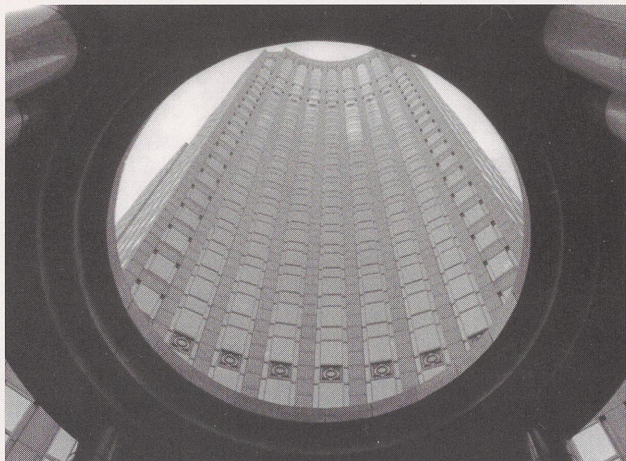
When we sat shoulder to shoulder
with chins in hand,
your bare right foot touching
my left,
with cool and fashionable
tangerine toes,
in the shade,
in laughter.

And how we wasted time-
Remind me once more
of what it was like to have
time.

Emy Noel(12)



Leah High(9)



Sarah Allen(10)

Nineteen

"Do you remember her?" they ask with eager ears
Then I go through the lengths of describing to them
That reoccurring dream I have of her in the mint-green room
Never quite sure if my mind made it up itself
To give me a sort of "peace"
She's always there in the back of my head; buried behind the math
equations
Always warm and heavy-paused at nineteen
And sometimes on my birthdays I think of her a little
Wondering if she's left me three minutes old in her head,
While I have left her at nineteen.

Jessica Crowell(10)

Loose Change

That cold lonely winter he left
was also the winter that your
bottle of expensive salon shampoo made
a ring of rust on the side of the tub
and you switched to using harsh grating words
to acquire your cleanliness.
You lived off the rust he had left behind
and I could not escape the metallic taste of the bullets
you shoved down my throat.
Trying to bring him back
was like powdering your nose with an ax,
yet it never bothered you
to cut off your nose to spite your face.
As you struggled to capture the water of life
in a berry basket,
stopping to collect each small drop that
dared to seep in between the woven strands,
I grew on you like a unwanted tail.
You tried to cut me off or
pretend I wasn't yours,
but you finally found the best you could do
was to put me in your pocket
to jingle around with your loose change
and collect lint with your handkerchief.

Sarah Allen(10)

Winter

"i need a little place in the sun sometimes or I think that i might die."

When it turned October it was as if the last lingering thoughts of summer were turned off like a switch by a cold hand

I had no more thoughts or tan or breezy days on the porch or barefoot on hot asphalt

I stopped writing in my journal for a while

I felt numb and dead and terrible cold, like the candle that finally burns itself out

November shocked me none the less

I looked down at my legs and wondered where such bruises came from

deep purple -- like the bleeding over of some inner source

I remember the stark white walls (White as a shark's tooth) of my bathroom as I would pull myself

When you are naked you cannot lie -- cannot hide

One of my teachers told me my writing was not developed

I was edging on greatness but struck in melodrama

actually, maybe that's what I told myself

because November is a blur now and I cannot remember anything specific --

only the sound of boots clicking against frozen sidewalks

December is the harvest time
Halloween and Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations
are thrown into one basket
of confusion on where we should be now that another 12 months
has passed us by
we are reaping what we've sown

In California they don't understand the desires winter brings
they are never completely stripped of the security of the sun
and I think that is what accounts for your basic difference in nature
they ask me where I'm from...

The Saint Andrea fault line splits Malibu and I imagine the whole
earth shaking and then opening
up and I fall in and am never faced with duplicitous beauty again.
The ocean presents a problem -- a standard which I must live by --
to never fall asleep without the sound of crashing waves.
The warmth that Christmas lights and music and decorated malls
fills me with in December is far
greater and richer and deeper than the sun's ultraviolet rays--
or at least it will subdue denial until my summer comes

I will miss that next year --
I will miss the missing when it is real.
that is my problem --
if we can name our own problems--
I never appreciate what I have while I have it
and I'll never long or love this again
at least not in the same way-- same time -- same place -- or season

Julianne Shelton(12)

Hallmarks

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